

From *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert*, Volume 3

in the series *Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces*, edited by

Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa, CA, 2002), Chapter 13, pp. 347-388.

This material is presented solely for non-commercial educational/research purposes.

❁ 13 ❁

“VOICES FROM THE LAKE: THE SECRET GENOCIDE”

J. Michael Hagopian

Introduction to the Script

The documentary “Voices from the Lake” is an outgrowth of the Armenian Film Foundation’s “Witnesses Film Project,” conceived in 1981 as a defining contribution to the Armenian people. The original idea was to make a feature-length film of four hours duration. To achieve this objective, more than fifteen years were devoted to gathering 16 millimeter film interviews with the rapidly diminishing survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Some 350 survivors were filmed in thirteen countries. Most of these lived on the West Coast of the United States, with substantial numbers from the Detroit area and the East Coast, together with more than twenty survivors in each of the following countries: Armenia, Australia, Canada, Greece, and Syria. Thirty-eight of these eyewitnesses were Greeks or Arabs.

Once editing began in 1995, it became apparent that the film would be too long (six hours in length) and the abundant sequences on Kharpert were making it unbalanced. In fact, there appeared to be three distinct films: one on the Kharpert region as the crossroad for slaughter and the funneling of caravans to the desert; a second on German complicity and the movement of deportees in the west to the east, featuring the Berlin to Baghdad Railway; and a third on the anatomy of the Armenian Genocide, with the forced marches of deportees starting from the seacoast of the Black Sea southward to the Syrian desert of Deir el-Zor, featuring the Euphrates River. The Kharpert material was thus launched as a separate and independent film.

Of all the regions of the Armenian Plateau, the Kharpert area contains the most plentiful visual and written evidentiary material.

A number of factors may have combined to make this the case: the existence of an American college, the presence of the only American consulate in central and eastern Anatolia, the headquarters of several foreign missionary stations (American, German, Danish, French), a large core of educated Armenians and many other Armenians who survived or escaped the massacres, including those who had previously emigrated to the United States and were in possession of many family photographs.

In the initial stages the working title of the film was "The Last Days of Kharpert." It was at that time that Professor Richard Hovannisian viewed the work print and decided to use twenty-five minutes of it in the UCLA series on Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces. At the time of the conference on Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert, May 1998, the script was at draft number 14 (subsequently the script passed through thirteen more drafts before the final recording). The film was completed one year later, after technical and photographic improvements.

In developing the thematic structure of the film, it seemed effective, as well as innovative, to use the testimony of non-Armenian eyewitnesses for purposes of primary documentation and to use the Armenian survivors only to substantiate the facts. For each event at least two corroborators were used. The same story is often retold from three or four perspectives. Redundancy was tolerated as the price for incontrovertible evidence.

The style of the script, as in all my documentaries, defers to the visuals. Words complement the photographs. Words are written after the film is partially edited, not the other way around. And if a combination of pictures, music, and sound effects tells the story or establishes a mood or evokes a belief in the authenticity of the documentation, then the written word is held to a minimum.

From this discussion it should be apparent that to get the full meaning of the motion picture, both the script and picture should be viewed and heard together. It is in this sense that the script appearing in this chapter should be read. Still, every attempt has been made to prepare a script that is accurate and as complete as possible without visuals. There is something unique about documentary film vocabulary. The script is not composed in an expository style. A more limited vocabulary is at the disposal of the writer. Certain words are not "good" film words or are not effective, meaningful,

or understandable when vocalized. Many perfectly acceptable words and beautiful enhancements on a written page are anathema in a darkened room. In a documentary script, it is common practice to avoid flowery, oratorical, or complex sentences. It is best to use short words and action verbs. Because a motion picture moves fast (most scenes being from two to five seconds in length), sentences must be brief and precise, and the sentence structure needs to follow the movement of the action, sometimes necessitating grammatical reconstruction. Thus, good English prose in a book may be regarded as poor writing for a film.

Finally, in a film there is no opportunity to use footnotes to authenticate the thesis or to add incidental information. Occasionally, however, there may be a one or two line superimposition in the lower third of the screen to identify a person or a place, to give a date, or to establish a relationship.

A few words are in order about the research, documents, and survivors figuring in "Voices from the Lake: The Secret Genocide." Covert filming in Turkey was funded by a grant from a major national foundation that understood the nature of the project and the need for secrecy. As a result we obtained the services of a veteran video cameraman in Southern California and of an experienced documentary film producer on the East Coast. They were sent to Turkey separately, after absorbing the contents of a thick book of facts that I had prepared for them, with instructions to leave these at home when they left the United States. The pair met for the first time in Istanbul. The views of Lake Goljuk came from this trip. Additional film footage from that assignment will be used in the next two documentaries of the trilogy.

Prominent American medical missionaries were in Kharpert during the Armenian Genocide. While going through the papers of Garabed Bedrosian, the assistant and bodyguard or *kavas* (cavass) of the United States Consul in Kharpert-Mezre, Leslie A. Davis, I came by chance across an amazing diary of a missionary. A transcript of the diary had been given to Melodie Ailanjian, the daughter of *kavas* Garabed's sister-in-law and a classmate in a Midwestern Bible college of the granddaughter of medical missionaries Dr. and Mrs. Henry Herbert Atkinson. Winning access to the diary was even more involved than sending a covert film crew to Turkey. To my knowledge this is the most explicit and incriminating eyewitness

account of the Armenian Genocide.

Looking for the name, the affiliation, and papers of the German missionary my father knew in Kharpert presented other research problems. As a boy I had heard of a confrontation between my father and a German in Mezre (Mezireh). My father had accused Kaiser Wilhelm of complicity with the Turkish perpetrators, and the German had dropped my father from his list of Armenians who were not to be deported, although at that time my father was the doctor for the German orphanage in Kharpert. The German's name sounded like Iman or Eyman, but I did not know his first name. During my preliminary research trip to Germany in 1988, I was not successful in locating him. In 1993 I walked the suburbs of Berlin searching for the headquarters of the German missionary organization in Kharpert.

Some months after giving up and returning to California, I received a thick parcel from the Deutscher Hilfsbund, a small denomination devoted to "German aid for Christian charity in the Orient," with the details on a Johannes Ehmann. After meeting the young German scholar Hilmar Kaiser at Dr. Hovannisian's symposium in 1998, I made arrangements for him to accompany me on my third research trip to Germany. In the course of that work, we visited many federal, provincial, and private archives in Germany and photographed documents in their original form. We were able to locate additional documents on Ehmann and these appear for the first time in the film.

The key to locating the non-official papers and photographs of Leslie Davis was Dr. Sarah Bedrosian. Kacho Khachadourian told us the stories about Lake Goljuk and the songs from the Armenian village on its southern shore. Other research sources from witnesses and survivors are discussed below in the general order of appearance in "Voices from the Lake."

Harriet Atkinson Newcomb, the first of sixteen witnesses used in the film, was the youngest of three Atkinson children born in Mezre on June 7, 1911. She attended the Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey. Later in life she taught music and voice and served as choir director. She was married to Raymond E. Newcomb on October 11, 1941, and died in Massachusetts on February 2, 1998, leaving no heirs. Harriet was in possession of the second volume

(1909-17) of her mother's diary and gave me permission to use the written text as well as the photographs. Her older sister Alice has possession of the first half (1902-09), a record also from the Kharpert days. The second half of the diary was published in 2000 by Gomidas Institute Books, with a foreword that I prepared.

Tacy Adelia Wilkinson Atkinson was born in Salem, Nebraska, on July 3, 1870, and graduated from Pacific Grove University in Forest Grove, Oregon, in 1899. She started writing a diary on February 1, 1901. Her first entry reads: "I, Tacy Adelia Wilkinson, discover a tumor in the breast." The condition came to the attention of a young surgeon, Dr. Henry Herbert Atkinson, who had just finished residency at the Stanford University School of Medicine. The couple married on July 7, 1901, in San Rafael, California. Dr. Atkinson came from a tradition of missionary work, himself being born in the mission field in India.

With great zeal and visions of converting Turks and other Muslims and administering to Armenians, the Atkinsons arrived at Euphrates College in Kharpert on August 22, 1902. From the hilltop, they surveyed the fertile valley below, abundant with the summer's fruit. The breeze from the towering Taurus Mountains was blowing gently through the orchards, carrying the scent from the fields through the corridors of the college dormitory where they were to live for the first year. They liked this new and strange world that was to be their tormented home for thirteen years.

Dr. Atkinson died of typhus on Christmas Day, 1915. Tacy carried on his work for two more years until forced to leave when the Turkish government severed diplomatic relations with the United States after America's entry into World War I on the Allied side.

The last words written in Mrs. Atkinson's diary sum up the years of turmoil and tears during which she witnessed the total decimation of the Armenian world that had sheltered her. The entries between April 14 and 27, 1917, read: "Mardiros was released from prison. . . . Pompish Yughaper was released. . . . Mrs. Riggs is down sick with typhus. . . . Emma passed away today and we have all decided to go." Tacy Atkinson with her three children returned to America in May 1917. She wrote and lectured on her experiences in Turkey until her death in Philadelphia on December 1, 1937.

Dr. Henry Herbert Atkinson, director of the Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital in Mezre, makes his singular contribution in the film by accompanying Consul Leslie Davis to Lake Goljuk to verify the massacre and drowning at the shoreline of 10,000 to 15,000 Armenians.

Maria Jacobsen, head of the Danish Mission in Kharpert, continued her service to the destitute survivors of the genocide after leaving Turkey. She operated an orphanage, the Birds' Nest (*Trchnots Poy*n) Mission in Lebanon, during the 1920s.

Johannes Ehmann, head of the German mission and orphanage in Mezre from 1897 to 1919, was born in 1870 in Breitenfurst Welgheim in the German state of Württemberg. He married Helene Riefkoll in 1898, and they had four children. For a period beginning in 1924 he was director of a mission in Bulgaria. In 1937 the Ehmans returned to Germany. The wife died in Tübingen on February 5, 1950, but I have found no additional information about Mr. Ehmann.

Aghavnie Hagopian, my mother, loved more than any other house in her lifetime the home that Johannes Ehmann left behind when his beloved Germany was defeated in World War I. For several years my father rented the large estate built behind the German orphanage as a home and medical clinic. I remember the top floor with its huge salon, where I recovered from typhus, the swimming pool in the garden where I almost drowned, and Waldman, the enormous killer dog that Ehmann gave to my father as a parting remembrance.

Shortly after leaving Euphrates College, Aghavnie Shatanian met Dr. Mikael Hagopian at the home of an American missionary in Arabkir. They were married in 1912, and I was born the following year in Mezre; my sister Mary was born three years later. At that time, my father was in private medical practice, devoting part of his time as the chief non-American surgeon at the Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital in Mezre under the direction of Dr. H. Herbert Atkinson.

My mother's recollections of the massacres and deportations were many. Unfortunately, I interviewed her on film only once, but it turned out to be a critical testimony in which she substantiates both what Tacy Atkinson and Consul Leslie Davis independently write

about on June 23, 1915, she in her diary and he in a report to the Department of State.

It was at my mother's urging that the family left Kharpert in 1922. My father had shipped to Beirut his sizable collection of surgical instruments from England and Germany. After he sold these to Lebanese doctors, the family sailed from Beirut and arrived in Boston in 1923. My mother loved Massachusetts and persuaded father to take the medical board examination there. During his medical practice of four years in Boston, he harbored the desire to go to Fresno, with the thought of becoming a farmer.

In 1927 the family arrived in Kingsburg, California, where father was reunited with his nephews, Lucas and Aram Tahmazian, and re-established ties with the family of kavas Garabed Bedrosian. He remained in medical practice in Fresno until 1952, the year of his death. For many years, he was the family physician of the Bedrosians and the Garabed Der Minassians (also in the film).

To the end of her life on July 4, 1976, in Thousand Oaks, California, Aghavnie Hagopian yearned for the good life she had with servants in Kharpert. She became a U.S. citizen in Fresno but never learned to use the English language fluently. She never liked Fresno. As many Armenians of her generation, she always thought of her life as an orphan and as one in exile.

Alice Muggerditchian Shipley, born in Dikranagerd (Tigranakert; Diarbekir) soon after the turn of the century, was the daughter of Reverend K.M. Muggerditchian, a British citizen, commonly known as Reverend Thomas, a designation acquired during long service in the British diplomatic corps. Separated from her husband who was in hiding, mother Muggerditchian and her six children spent the tumultuous years of 1915 and 1916 in Kharpert, mainly under the protection of Consul Leslie Davis and Dr. and Mrs. Henry Herbert Atkinson.

Alice fled from Kharpert by way of Dersim to Tiflis, Baku, Archangel, and then Scotland. The family was finally reunited in California. She received training as a nurse and in 1942 married Arizona native Dayton Shipley and spent the rest of her life in the Phoenix area working with Native American tribal groups and completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology, sociology, and psychology at Arizona State University.

Leslie A. Davis, United States Consul in Kharpert from 1913 to 1917, was born in Port Jefferson, New York, in 1876 and died in 1960 at the age of 84 in Southbridge, Massachusetts. He was the descendant of whaling sea captains. Davis received his B.A. degree from Cornell University and his law degree from George Washington University. He practiced briefly before entering the U.S. Foreign Service. He married Catherine Tarman, while in St. Petersburg, Russia. The couple had three children, Adele, Aino, and Caleb. Born in London on May 23, 1918, Caleb became a master cabinetmaker in Rhode Island. He comments on his father in "Voices from the Lake."

Most of the material I found on Davis, aside from his reports to the U.S. Department of State, was in the archives of Garabed Bedrosian, the consul's assistant and bodyguard. Davis' extensive photographic collection on Kharpert was given for safekeeping to the publisher of the main report of Leslie Davis that appeared under the title *The Slaughterhouse Province*. I have viewed these photographs but have not been able to access them despite repeated requests both by me and Caleb Davis. It will be a great loss if these photographs are not deposited in a museum or a library.

After leaving Kharpert, Consul Davis served as a U.S. consular representative in Archangel, Helsinki, Zagreb, Patras (Greece), Glasgow, and London until his retirement in 1939. He traveled to Fresno in 1950 for a final reunion with his friend and assistant Garabed Bedrosian. A short 8 millimeter film was taken of the two of them together, but because its existence became known after the completion of "Voices from the Lake" it is not utilized in the film.

Haiastan Terzian, the sister-in-law of kavas Garabed Bedrosian, was one of the forty or so persons hiding in the attic or in the walled garden of the U.S. Consulate during the war years. She was born in Kharpert on October 25, 1903, and arrived in America at an early age with the Bedrosian family. She spent most of her life with her husband Nishan in Pasadena and Altadena in Southern California until she died at the age of 97 in 2001. Haiastan is survived by three children, six grandchildren, and nine great grandchildren.

Garabed Der Minassian was a survivor of the condemned group of 800 who passed under Aghavnie Hagopian's window on the night

of June 22, 1915. Eventually, he found his way to California, where he bought a farm in Fowler and became a successful cultivator of grapes, peaches, and apricots.

Monsignor Hovsep (Joseph) Kalajian was born in 1908 in the village of Keferds in the southeastern region of Kharpert. Surviving the deportations and massacres of 1915, he ended up in Aleppo, where he was placed in the Armenian orphanage directed by Reverend Aharon Shirajian and was then transferred to a Catholic orphanage in Constantinople. He studied at the Levonian Seminary in Rome from 1921 to 1931 and received a degree from the Urban University. He became a student and then the private secretary of Cardinal Gregory Agajanian. Hovsep Vartabed went to Philadelphia in 1946 as an assistant to Monsignor Stepan Stepanian at St. Mark's Armenian Catholic Church and two years later transferred to Detroit to establish the St. Vartan's Church. He founded the Detroit Armenian Community Choir and maintained a strong interest in music until his death in November 1999.

Sam Kadorian, now residing in Los Angeles, was born on April 14, 1907, in Hiusenig, a village at the foot of the mountain between Kharpert and Mezre. During the genocide, he fled with his grandmother, mother, and two sisters to Urfa, where they were shielded by Jacob Künzler, a Swiss missionary. Sam later fled to Aleppo and from there immigrated to Chicago, sponsored by two uncles living in the United States. During World War II, he served as a military cameraman and remained in the audio-visual field after the war.

Dr. Sarah Bedrosian, who in the film discusses the relationship between Consul Leslie Davis and her father, kavas Garabed Bedrosian, is a survivor herself, arriving with her family in the United States in 1923 at the age of four. She is the youngest child of Garabed and Aghavnie Bedrosian. After graduating from Fresno State College with teaching credentials, Sarah attended the University of Southern California and in 1967 became the first female Ph.D. in Business Administration from USC. Dr. Bedrosian served as a faculty member in the Department of Business at Fresno State until she retired in 1987. She possesses extensive correspondence and some photographic files on her family and on her father's relationship with

Consul Davis, which I discovered accidentally during a search of Bedrosian family photographs.

Kavas (Cavass) Garabed Bedrosian, Sarah's father, served as bodyguard to three American consuls in Kharpert, from 1905 to 1917. He remained in Kharpert until 1922 and looked after papers and documents of Consul Davis. In 1922 he led a convoy of Armenian orphans out of Kharpert to Syria. Garabed arrived in Providence in 1923 and the next year moved to Fresno, where he was a farmer and lay leader of the Armenian Brethren Church almost to the end of his life. He passed away in 1977 at the age of 94.

Born in 1883 in the village Bazmashen (Pazmashen) in the Golden Plain of Kharpert, Garabed came from a family of farmers and weavers. At the age of seventeen, he secured a job as stable boy at the U.S. Consulate in Mezre. Soon, he was promoted to work in the kitchen and was then elevated to the position of translator and bodyguard (kavas) for the American consul. The Bedrosians had four children, John, Arshalouse, Peter, and Sarah, the only one who still lives in Fresno. As of this writing, the Garabed Bedrosian clan has eight grandchildren, ten great grandchildren, and six great great grandchildren living from South Carolina to Hawaii.

Kacho (Khachadour) Khachadourian was born in Tsovk, the Armenian village on the southern shore of Lake Goljuk, in December 1902. After many ordeals, he arrived in Detroit in 1924 and operated a restaurant. He married in 1933 and had three sons. He died in Detroit in November 1980.

Haroutiun (Harry) Chitjian was born on August 15, 1901, in the village of Ismail, near Peri in the Charsanjak region of Kharpert. His father was a printer of designs on textiles. In 1921 he fled from Kharpert to Iran and eventually made his way to Aleppo, Beirut, Marseilles, and Mexico City where he arrived in 1923. He married Hovsana Piloyan in 1929. Haroutiun operated an ice cream parlor and worked as a shoe salesman. In the United States, he became a grocer and later a real estate broker until his retirement in 1975. He celebrated his 100th birthday on August 15, 2001, somewhat weak of body but very strong of mind and will. His daughter Sarah is currently editing a volume of his memoirs, intended to be jointly

released by separate publishers in Armenian and English.

Haroutiun Chitjian best illustrates the intricate interrelationships among many of the witnesses in "Voices from the Lake." There was first of all the close association of the principals: Consul Leslie Davis, Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Atkinson, Dr. Mikael Hagopian, Mr. and Mrs. Johannes Ehmann, Miss Maria Jacobsen and kavas Garabed Bedrosian, with his sister-in-law, Haiastan (Mahakian) Terzian. They all knew each other intimately and worked or visited with each other on a regular basis. The Atkinson, Hagopian, Ehmann, and Bedrosian children sometimes played together or were in grade school together. Haroutiun Chitjian enters this circle at the age of thirteen, when after escaping from his Kurdish captors he was employed by Dr. Hagopian in 1916-17 to look after the two young Hagopian children and to act as a handyman around the house and the medical clinic.¹

My production team persuaded me as a survivor of the genocide, albeit only eighteen months old when it began, to serve as a vehicle by which to unify the structure of the film. As the film opens, the viewer finds me at the mulberry tree, one of the descendants of the thousands of such trees that once covered the floor of the Kharpert plain, harboring sentimental memories for every survivor from the region. We begin the film through the leaves of the mulberry tree, wander through groves in the body of the film, and conclude with a single fragile leaf, which symbolizes the last days of Kharpert.²

¹ In the preparation of the film and script, I am indebted to Barbara Gilmore, associate producer; Glenn Farr, co-producer; Carla Garapedian, narrator and consultant; and Walter Karabian, executive producer. Other individuals to whom I am indebted for research, consultation, information, and guidance are as follows: George Aghjayan, Norman Corwin, Vahakn N. Dadrian, Richard G. Hovannisian, Sarkis Karayan, Jean Claude Kebabdjian, Raymond H. Kévorkian, and Ara Sarafian. Vahe Haig's monumental work in Armenian, *Kharpert and Its Golden Plain*, was particularly useful for information, photographs, and maps. I am grateful to Caleb and Barbara Davis for the first carbon copy of the final official report that Consul Leslie Davis sent to the Department of State; to Sarah Bedrosian for the extensive manuscript and photographic files on her father, kavas Garabed, and Consul Davis; to Harriet Atkinson Newcomb for her mother's diary and her photographic collection; to Harry Chitjian for sharing with me letters he had written in the Arabic script while a captive; to Robert Khachadourian for the journal of his father and assistance in gathering information on Lake Goljuk; and to Haiastan Terzian for introducing me to Maria Jacobsen's diary and to Esther Tapelband for translation of it from Danish. I am also thankful to Hilmar Kaiser for verification of historical information.

² Major granting institutions, agencies, and individuals to the Armenian Film

"VOICES FROM THE LAKE: THE SECRET GENOCIDE"**J. Michael Hagopian**

Editor's note: The following script of "Voices from the Lake" has been adapted and edited for publication in print format. All direct quotations remain true to the original script.

PROLOGUE:

IN 1915 A MONUMENTAL TRAGEDY OCCURRED IN TURKEY. NEARLY ALL THE ARMENIANS VANISHED. THIS IS THE STORY OF ONE TOWN IN THE FIRST GREAT GENOCIDE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

J. Michael Hagopian:

"I remember the mulberry leaves . . . from my childhood, from my home far away. I remember . . . in the springtime the grass sprouted as velvet on the fertile plains of Kharpert . . . and the mountain streams flowed past our orchard on the outskirts of town. I remember in springtime the tender mulberry leaves seeking sunlight. But, I remember mostly the summer . . . the dark green, brooding mulberry leaves and the tasty ripened berries. One summer stands out as if it were yesterday—the people, their voices . . . whispering from the past. . . .

Every time I touch these mulberry leaves I think of the Armenians who were killed 7,000 miles away. The seed for this tree came about 80 years ago from Kharpert, a town in Turkey where I was born. For most of my life I did not know what really happened during the first wholesale genocide of the twentieth century. My parents merely told me that the mulberry trees had saved my life."

Narrator:

An ancient people . . . an ancient land. . . . For three thousand years

Foundation Witnesses project include the following: The Foundations of the Milken Families, National Endowment for the Arts, J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation, Atlantic Richfield Foundation, Lincy Foundation, California Arts Council, California State Legislature, Armenian National Committee of America, Ignatius Foundation, American National Committee for Homeless Armenians, Armenian Assembly of America, Arshag and Eleanor Dickranian, Walter and Laurel Karabian, and Joanne Elise Hagopian.

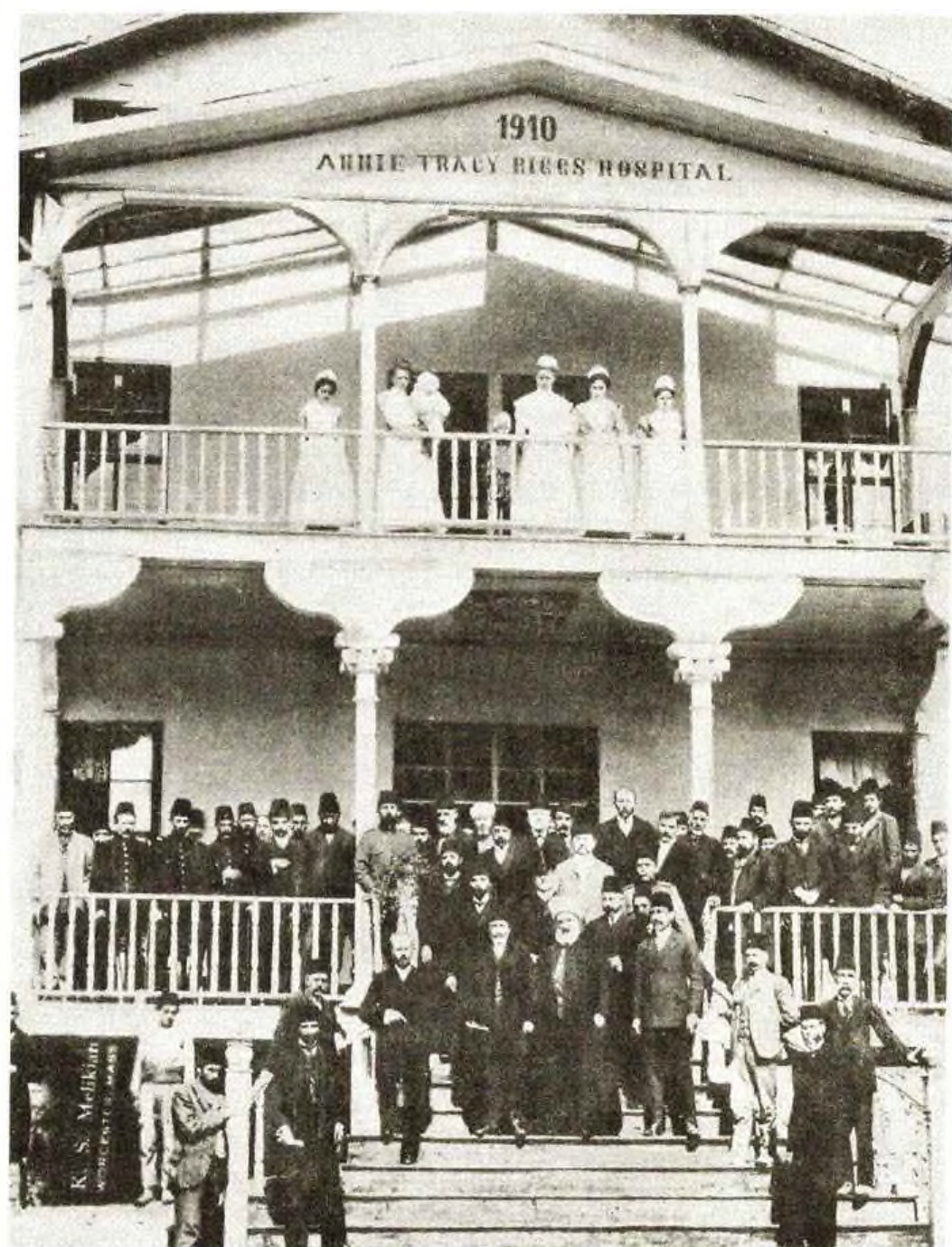
the Armenians had lived at the crossroads of the Middle East. At times they had their own independent kingdoms. But their land was in the pathway of conquerors—empire builders of the ancient world: Persians, Romans, Arabs, and Turks. Between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, the Christian Armenians lived as a subject people in the Ottoman Empire under fierce Turkish domination.

In the nineteenth century, oppression of the Armenians increased. Periodic massacres took place. No family would be left untouched. The Ottoman Empire was crumbling, as subject peoples such as the Greeks, Serbs, Montenegrins, Romanians, and Bulgarians fought their Turkish overlords and established autonomous and then independent states. With the great loss of territories in Europe during the Balkan wars, 1912-13, the Young Turk leaders turned eastward with dreams of creating a vast Turkic empire extending to Central Asia. But one group stood in the direct path of that design . . . the Armenians. Under the cover of World War I, the Turkish dictators attempted to unite the Turkic peoples. They inflamed religious prejudices . . . and embarked on a policy of deportation and genocide.

The city of Kharpert stood high on a vast plateau near a beautiful lake. The almost legendary Tigris River of Mesopotamia had its source near Kharpert . . . and the mighty Euphrates gathered its force in the Golden Plain of Kharpert. For centuries the region has served as a granary for empires and a passageway for invaders. Kharpert was once part of an ancient Armenian kingdom, on the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. Here was the site of a great fortress built centuries before the Christian era. Here, too, man used metal tools as early as 9,000 years ago.

What was the city of Kharpert is now a place of ruins and wind-swept, barren walls. Of the more than two million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, about 150,000 lived in the region of Kharpert. Today, there is scarcely a handful left. Centrally located in what is now eastern Turkey, Kharpert stood at the crossroads of trade and commerce. In 1915 it became a focal point in the extermination of the Armenian people.

Mezre, the main business center of the Kharpert region, was the capital of the province or *vilayet*. The government house and the police station were on the main street. On the same street lived the governor or *vali* of the province and five wealthy Armenian manufacturing brothers, known as the Fabrikatorians. Their elegant homes



Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital, Mezre, 1910



The Hospital and Operating Room



Maria Jacobsen and Alice Atkinson



Consul Leslie Davis (Later Years)



Annie Tacy Riggs Hospital Armenian Staff Picnic, Aghavnie and
Dr. Mikael Hagopian (left 3rd-4th)



Kavas Garabed Bedrosian with Harriet Atkinson at Lake Goljuk



Lake Goljuk



Dersim Kurds



Pertag

next to each other were admired by Turks and Armenians alike. They operated a large textile mill, producing fine silk and cotton cloth.

Many farming villages ringed Kharpert and Mezre: grapes for wine, mulberries for silk. Because of its productivity, the region was known as the Golden Plain of Kharpert. The area was populated with Armenians, Turks, and Kurds—a Muslim people living mostly in the hills and mountains.

The distance between Mezre and Kharpert was only 3 miles. Armenians referred to the whole area as Kharpert. Americans and Europeans called it Harpoot. Among the Armenians who lived in town were many professionals, businessmen, and teachers. The Armenians were also the chief craftsmen and artisans of the region. They constituted the economic backbone of the community. Their progress was often a cause of envy among the Turks. Their Christian faith was a matter of scorn, . . . but no one knew then how drastically their world was to change.

J. Michael Hagopian:

“Amazingly, I found this photograph of my parents in the attic of a missionary family in Rhode Island after twenty years of research. My father, affectionately known as Dr. Mikael, was the chief of surgery in the American hospital in Kharpert. My parents were the only known survivors of the genocide of those who were photographed together in this picture that summer afternoon in 1914.”

Haroutiun (Harry) Chitjian

“The Hagopian home was four miles from the American hospital. Dr. Mikael worked there. “On the left side was the German orphanage. Dr. Mikael’s farm was as big as the German grounds.

The garden was very large. There were mulberry trees, apple trees and vegetables. Everything was there.”

Narrator:

The voices of five people from Western Europe and the United States of America have emerged as key eyewitnesses to what happened in Kharpert in 1915:

1) Maria Jacobsen of Denmark came to Kharpert as an educator. She kept a detailed diary of the Armenian Genocide.

2) Mrs. Tacy Atkinson, an American medical missionary, kept one

of two known journals of the events of the genocide in the Kharpert area.

3) Dr. Henry Herbert Atkinson, Tacy's husband, was the director of the American hospital.

4) Johannes Ehmann, a German Protestant missionary, had come to the Kharpert area in 1897 to direct an orphanage for Armenian children whose families had been killed in massacres in the 1890s during the regime of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II.

5) United States Consul Leslie Davis was the fifth eyewitness from the West. He was the only American official in the interior of Turkey at that time.

Garabed Bedrosian was the interpreter and bodyguard of the American consul. He was to play a central role in finding out what happened to the Armenians after they disappeared from Kharpert. He and other Armenian survivors corroborated the information provided by the five foreign eyewitnesses.

The original purpose of the missionaries was to convert the Turks and other Muslims to Christianity. They failed in this attempt, but the Armenians, who had become Christians fifteen centuries earlier, found much in common with the Western missionaries. In 1878 the Congregational missionaries established a college in Kharpert, first called Armenia College. Under Turkish protest, it was renamed Euphrates College. Most of the faculty and students were Armenian.

The missionaries in Kharpert were from several countries, but they had a special bond. They often held social gatherings for the college and the hospital staff and for diplomatic personnel and visitors. For the missionaries, it was a good life. For the Armenians, it was the calm before the storm.

Sometimes the missionaries made trips to the banks of the Euphrates and to nearby Lake Goljuk (Tsovk). Kharpert was ideally situated as a recreational area. The Euphrates River curved around the city some 10 miles away, and Lake Goljuk was less than 20 miles to the south. Both the river and the lake were to play a critical role in the destiny of the Armenian people.

Harriet Atkinson:

"We used to go camping by Lake Goljuk in the summertime, up under the mulberry trees. My father and Dr. [David] Shepard would often meet up there and spend hours playing chess. They would put

up a tent stool between them, and they would study out those moves in chess and play chess by the hour. It was a lovely place overlooking the lake. And there was a lovely beach there where we used to go swimming. And it was under the mulberry trees. We used to eat the mulberries as fast as we could pick them. We had a good time under the trees.

My mother wrote down things. She didn't write them every day. She just wrote them as they happened once in a while, but she did record a lot of what happened and what she saw and experienced and put them in her diary along with a lot of the material that she wanted to remember about us children while we were little.

Tacy Atkinson was keeping a secret record . . . one which could have exposed her to Turkish authorities."

Narrator:

The first entry by Mrs. Atkinson about the Armenian Genocide was on May 2, 1915.

Tacy Atkinson:

May 2: "Several professors were put in prison."

Narrator:

The Atkinsons observed the tragedy that was unfolding from the vantage point of the house they had built. Mrs. Atkinson had personally designed the building and had done a great deal of the carpentry herself. She would often sit by the window to sort out what was happening in the street below. Maria Jacobsen, the Danish missionary, was also keeping a diary. On May 1, a day before Mrs. Atkinson's entry, Jacobsen, writing in Danish, recorded the same events in her journal.

Maria Jacobsen:

May 1: "There were a lot of disturbances in Kharpert. Three of our professors and a teacher were fetched and picked up by soldiers and brought to the government building. A little later they were brought to their houses again while their houses were being searched. Any piece of paper with something written on was taken. All the men were put in jail. Everyone is scared and expects a massacre."

May 4: "People are in great fear. Everyone says it is being done according to a plan and it's a certain beginning of a massacre."

Narrator:

The German missionary, Johannes Ehmann, the director of the Armenian orphanage, could see the danger to Armenians. On May 5, Johannes Ehmann addressed the situation in Kharpert in a letter to the German ambassador in Constantinople, Herr Hans von Wangenheim. He wrote: "For a few days strict house searches are conducted in Christian houses in the town and its surroundings. People who appear suspicious to the government are arrested and the people are ordered to give up their arms."

Alice Shipley:

"Before our men were destroyed in prisons, the Turks sent out messages that if the wives of these men would turn in all the guns, they would release their husbands from the prisons. And Reverend [Vartan] Amerkhanian spoke from the pulpit one day, saying that if the women would turn in their guns, the Turks would release their husbands. Whereupon, Mr. Henry Riggs, the missionary who was head of the colleges there, got up and said, 'If I were you, even if you don't have guns, buy them and turn them in.'

So, many of the women bought guns and turned them to the government. Immediately a message went to Constantinople saying that they had confiscated 1,000 guns from the Armenians who were rising against them. Consequently, they kept pushing around that we were rising against the Turks, which we were not. Those guns were bought and turned in to have their husbands released.

Instead of releasing the husbands, they murdered and butchered them during the night and buried them in a big grave outside the city. Then, of course, the men were all butchered and they began to take the women down the hill and kill them, butchered them also."

Narrator:

In June 1915, there was unusual military activity in the civilian areas of Kharpert. The American Consulate in Kharpert realized that the Turkish government was falsely accusing the Armenians of hiding arms. Consul Davis, one of the key eyewitnesses, alerted Washington about the peril that the Armenians faced. Caleb Davis later found

his father's original documents. He saw that they authenticated the testimonies given by the other witnesses. Some of Davis' reports were censored by the Turkish government and never reached the United States.

Consul Davis:

"I think it is probable that in many cases the bombs, which were found in the back yards of the persons accused, were actually buried there by the police so as to manufacture evidence against the Armenians. . . . It is certain, however, that many of the people who surrendered some kind of weapon were never engaged in a revolutionary plot and that there was not even so much evidence against many of them who were tortured."

Tacy Atkinson:

"Now began tortures to make them confess to having bombs. Before this time, all Armenians had been told to give up their arms and many had done so. Now they began to torture to make them tell where their arms are hidden."

Narrator:

On June 18, Johannes Ehmann sent an urgent telegram to the German Embassy: "The Christians have given up their arms." And he makes clear that any allegations that the local Armenians would be in rebellion against the government are simply false.

Alice Shipley:

"Professor [Mugrditch] Vorperian was taken in with all the intelligentsia to the prisons, and he was not tortured. But he was made to sit on a stool there and watch as they tortured the other professors, teachers, and doctors, while they did some horrible, very horrible things to them, like putting a hot, red hot metal on top of one professor's head. And then pulled his nails out with pliers. They put their hands and feet in the vice and pulled their nails and toenails out. And they would hang them upside down in the toilet, which was an outhouse, until their heads touched the filth. And then they would cut, slice the bottoms of their feet and put salt on them. And they would torture and torture all the professors.

With one professor, [Nikoghos] Tenekejian, who was the head of

the Armenian group in Kharpert, they pulled his eyes out and sent it to his family.

And Vorperian lost his mind. They released him and sent him to his home. And this home was just a block from where we lived. We could watch him. He would run out of the house naked and he would scream: 'Oh God, they did it again. Oh God, help them. They did it again. Help, Help, Help,' he'd scream. And then his family would run out with sheets and bedspreads after him, and cover and take him in. This took place for about a month until finally he died."

Narrator:

It was a time of treachery and deceit. Armenians had endured persecution and massacres before. Now, something more sinister was going on. Parents kept their children at home. Families were governed by fear.

Living not far away from the Atkinsons were the Hagopians, Dr. Mikael and his wife. During the night of June 22, Aghavnie Hagopian was startled by frantic pounding on the door. In his study, Dr. Mikael was entering notations in his journal. This night he feared the Turkish police had come to arrest and imprison him under the cover of darkness. In fact, Dr. Mikael had been summoned to the governor's home to perform emergency surgery on a Turkish chieftain.

Mrs. Hagopian feared for her husband's life. Her eyes were on the street below when she saw many of her husband's friends, who had been tortured in prison. They were being carried away in garbage carts. She was certain he was among them.

Aghavnie Hagopian:

"They took a large group that had been imprisoned for several days. They took them in garbage carts. Through the window, I saw them by the light of the moon. They made the able-bodied walk and put the old ones in the garbage carts."

Narrator:

The Armenians deported this night became known as the group of 800, the first of many groups forced on a death march. The next morning, Mrs. Atkinson entered in her diary independently what Mrs. Hagopian had witnessed the night before.

Tacy Atkinson:

June 23: "In the morning, we were stunned by the news that all the prisoners were quietly sent out bound in the night. Among them were many, in fact most of the leaders among the Armenians. . . . About this time, warnings from friendly Turks and Kurds were whispered to us that a massacre was planned within ten days. . . ."

Narrator:

American Consul Leslie Davis confirmed what the others had reported. All presumed that the 800 had been killed.

Caleb Davis:

"In his report to the State Department, my father, Consul Davis, wrote as follows: 'On the night of June 23, 1915, several hundred of the most prominent Armenians were sent away in ox carts from the local prison to an unknown destination. Among them were the bishops of the Armenian Gregorian [Apostolic] Church, most of the professors and instructors in Euphrates College and many of the leading merchants and professional men in Harpoot.'"

Narrator:

Three days later Ehmann again contacted his government. He was concerned about the German failure to act to stop the atrocities. In another urgent telegram, he warned: "The deportation of the whole Christian population of the town and land has been ordered without distinction."

Consul Davis:

"On Saturday afternoon, June 26, we were all startled by the announcement that the Turkish Government had ordered the deportation of every Armenian. . . . Some of the missionaries decided that they would like to go with them in order to be of assistance to those who might need help. I called on the vali about this and other matters. This request he refused absolutely, but after the people reached their destination the Americans might then join them if they wished."

Narrator:

June 27: Ehmann sent another telegram—this time in French so that it would go fast through Turkish censorship. He wrote: "The

Governor-General told me that the order to deport applies to all Armenian subjects of this province without distinction. I beg your excellency to make the necessary interventions because the order of deportation will be enforced after three days."

Haiastan Terzian:

"Consul Davis saved many Armenians. He used to have banquets for Turkish officers, the vali, the *kaimakam* [district governor], and the higher position Turks. He used to give great big dinners to them, and he was very friendly with them. So he could talk to them sometimes for Armenians—not to bother them. And all these people used to go hide in the attic—nobody should talk, nobody should move, so nobody would know that there's so many Armenians in the American Consulate."

Narrator:

Among those hiding in the consulate were relatives of Garabed Bedrosian, Consul Davis' translator and bodyguard.

Consul Davis:

"While these people were hiding in the Consulate the Turks were holding prayer meetings every night in the square in front of it and we could all hear them piously calling upon Allah to bless them in their efforts to kill the hated Christians. Night after night this same chant went up to heaven and day after day these Turks carried on their bloody work."

Tacy Atkinson:

July 10: "This afternoon the *delal* [town crier] went through the streets crying out that on Tuesday every Armenian is to go without exception."

Consul Davis:

"It has just been announced by the public crier that on Tuesday, July 13th every Armenian without exception must go."

Narrator:

Not every Armenian did go. Some hid; a few escaped. Garabed Der Minassian was one of them. He was one of the 800 deported during

the night of June 22. At his farm near Fresno, California, he recalled the horrors of that day—long repressed, never forgotten.

Garabed Der Minassian:

“When we heard the town crier calling all the town was surrounded by the gendarme and the authorities of the Turkish telling us to get ready, pack what we can pack for food and clothing. Anything that we can carry. And we have to leave our homes and go away.”

Alice Shipley:

“Before taking them out, they would come and write ‘*sufkiet*’ on everybody’s door. That meant ‘exile’ which meant that the following day they were going to be taken out and everybody had to be ready. Of course, they had everybody sell their belongings.

We took our eleven room house, emptied all the rooms and took them all down, and the auctioneer came and sold everything. We got 45 dollars out of the whole thing, eleven room house furnishings. And bought three donkeys. And the Turks took two donkeys away from us. That left us with one.

First the wealthy families were taken down. When we tried to go down with them, my father’s friend, Vehaj Effendi, he felt very responsible for us, so he sent word for us not to go.”

Narrator:

Some Turks, like Vehaj Effendi, were friendly. Others saved Armenian lives—like the director of Kharpert’s Red Cross—called the Red Crescent in Turkey.

Tacy Atkinson:

July 19: “The Mudir [director] of the Red Crescent called here today. He is one Turk who feels dreadful about these things. He has six hundred in his hospital of these poor exiles. . . . They will not give him workers to care for them. . . . He is surely doing his best. He says that one and a half million of Armenians have been killed these last few weeks.”

Narrator:

In this same period, the Turkish governor of Kharpert province received a telegram from Behaeddin Shakir, chief of the Special

Organization, a political unit in charge of deporting the Armenians. The telegram demanded to know if the responsible local official was performing his task well. The telegram read: "Are the Armenians, who are being deported from your area being liquidated? Are the harmful people, who you say are being banished and dispersed, being destroyed or are they being merely removed and sent away?"

Kharpert's central location on the Armenian Plateau made for an efficient gathering center for those marked for death. During the summer of 1915, Armenians from every part of the Ottoman Empire were being deported and killed by the Turks. On their forced march to the Syrian desert, many deportees passed through Kharpert. Working closely with the military, Turkish civilians would wait along the roadside outside of Kharpert to rob and massacre the Armenians.

Tacy Atkinson:

"Turkish men and officials were looking at the children, especially the little girls and choosing the best looking ones; and we saw them one by one led away to Turkish harems into a life of slavery."

Consul Davis:

"Mothers offered their children and begged one to take them. The Turks have been taking their choices of children and the girls for slaves or worse. In fact, they have even had their doctors there to examine more likely girls and to secure the best ones."

Narrator:

Consul Davis was horrified that some Armenian mothers who were about to be massacred would give up a child to be saved by a Turk. For this reason, he acquired a degree of contempt for the Armenians. Yet the life of every Armenian child hung in the balance . . . death march or slavery.

Harriet Atkinson:

"Somehow, I got away from my mother's baby-sitter, Koharig Demerjian, and I saw my mother and someone else come running down the front steps of the hospital. And they turned and went to the back gate of the compound. I followed along, and they did not know I was following them. And I saw . . . people being driven at the point of the gun, bayonet, down past the hospital compound. . . . And there

was a soldier on horseback, and she went over and grabbed him by the ankle and said something to him. I don't know what she said . . . and another soldier came up and took her by the arm and said: 'We will take you along too.' I was so glad they did not take Mother, too. But the others were taken, and they were killed."

Narrator:

The real goal of the deportation was to eliminate the Armenians through exhaustion, starvation . . . and massacre.

Monsignor Kalajian:

"My mother was holding my hand. We were being deported. We walked and walked. Within an hour we saw the bodies of the killed people rotting under the sun. I was terribly afraid. I held my nose from the terrible odor, and I closed my eyes so I could not see. We walked, fifty of us, my mother holding my hand, from the mountains of Kharpert to the wilderness of Syria."

Narrator:

Throughout the summer of 1915, caravan after caravan left Kharpert on forced death marches towards the desert. The official explanation was that the Armenians were being relocated to a safe zone. News filtered back slowly about what happened to the 800, the first group to leave. A nation was disappearing in the folds of these rugged mountains. Maria Jacobsen recorded the details in her diary.

Maria Jacobsen:

July 6: "Terrible things are happening again today in Kharpert. Soldiers have encircled the town, tried to imprison all men and boys over 13 years. About 800 prisoners were sent off early in the morning before people were up. They were all tied together. When they came to the other side of Kankie, they were led away from the road over the mountain to a valley. Here they were ordered to sit down and rest. When they were taken away from the road, they all knew they were going to be killed."

Garabed Der Minassian:

"They make us walk down to the fields instead of roads, and climb up to the wilderness wherever the thick woods and mountains was

coming. They make us walk four days. And finally we arrived into a valley, which was big high hills on three sides and one side was just a few trees and some rain water was running down, you know. So they ask us to sit down, everybody sat down, tried to eat and get some water from the ditch to drink."

Maria Jacobsen:

July 6: "Towards evening orders were given to soldiers to start shooting and bullets flew around them."

Garabed Der Minassian:

"Before we started to eat a little bit, all of a sudden we heard a gunshot in the air. Gunshots from all over, from this side, from both sides, all of this, a mob running through, hollering and swinging swords and clubs, and anything they have in their hands. They started checking all the crowd for money, jewelry, and everything, pushing people around."

Maria Jacobsen:

July 6: "But they ran out of bullets before they had everyone killed. So now they began to chop those with their little axes they carry in their belts and with bayonets."

Sam Kadorian:

"The gendarmes came and picked up all the boys between five and ten years old and threw them in a pile. And I happened to be one of the first ones, and I was at the bottom of the pile. After they had all the boys in this pile, they started with swords and bayonets, killing us boys. And one of the bayonets just hit me in my right cheek and the blood was streaming, not only the blood from my cheek but the blood from these dead boys, that hot blood coming all over me; and I couldn't scream, or I couldn't cry for fear that they would finish the job and kill me again."

Garabed Der Minassian:

"Then they knock me on the head. I fell down, and I don't remember what happened after that. Then when I wake up after midnight, I don't really know what the time really was. But I saw the moon rise. Thousands of people dead over there. The moon shone on their

bodies—some without clothes.

Then I heard my brother Mesrop call—my mother was still alive. I put her head in my lap. And my brother said, ‘Mamma wants some water,’ so I look around and find some broken dishes and ran down and got some water and put it in her mouth.”

Maria Jacobsen:

July 6: “Suddenly this man felt that a rope with which he was bound was loose and he jumped up and ran and with him about some thirty others. But most of them were caught and shot. Our friend ran and ran and he didn’t know where.”

Alice Shipley:

“The reason we found out that those men and boys were being speared and thrown into the trenches was when the fourteen- and fifteen-year olds that had not been killed would dig themselves out of trenches and come to the town, holding their guts hanging out of their bellies because the spears had made holes and the guts would be hanging out.”

Tacy Atkinson:

“We have a very much more authentic report of the 800 just described that I dare not write it now.”

Narrator:

Fearful of the Turks, Mrs. Atkinson carefully scratched out the massacre reference from her diary. Among those who disappeared during the night of June 22 were college students . . . professors . . . artists . . . musicians . . . writers. Most of the Armenian leadership of Kharpert was silenced forever. The five Fabrikatorian brothers were among those massacred. Their textile factory was destroyed, leaving even the Turkish military without uniforms.

The group of Armenians driven out of their homes on the night of June 22, 1915, had been sent to a secret destination. For months the public did not know where they were exiled or if they were even alive. A mystery shrouded their disappearance.

Those who remained wondered, if the Armenians were being deported to a safe zone, why weren’t the Turks also included? Why was it done secretly? The answers to these questions were never

clarified by the Turkish authorities in Constantinople. As allies with Germany in World War I, the Turks had assured the Germans that there was no general order to deport Armenians.

On July 17, a frustrated Johannes Ehmann wrote to the German ambassador in Constantinople disputing this view.

Hilmar Kaiser (paraphrasing Johannes Ehmann):

"He said that exactly the opposite had happened—that two weeks [earlier], that is the fifth of July, the general deportation had started in Kharpert and because of the consequences and the *fait accompli* achieved by the Turkish government there was not much left to be done."

Maria Jacobsen:

July 24: "The town crier today called from the mosques and around the streets that a Turk who hides an Armenian would be hanged and his house would be burned."

J. Michael Hagopian:

"At that time we were living next door to a friendly Turkish family. Father trusted our neighbor, but he suspected the motives of the government. Twice our family was threatened with deportation. Twice the order was lifted. My father knew it was only a matter of time before we would have to go. He looked to the hills just outside of town.

Finally, the *vali*—the governor—notified my father that he was going to deport our family with what he called a good caravan to have a 'safe' journey. Father knew that no one returned from their 'safe' journeys.

Life went on as usual for the Turks, but for the Armenians death seemed certain just outside of town. My parents were torn. I would be killed if I went on the caravan. I might die if they left me behind.

On the way to Lake Goljuk, my father had an orchard. It was ten acres in size and was surrounded by high walls. I remember the mulberry grove. It was hidden by a line of tall poplars. The mulberry trees were planted as a wedding gift to my mother. Now, my father thought this would make a good hiding place for me.

One rainy night he carried me to the middle of his mulberry grove . . . to a dry well. To save my life he placed me down in it, hoping

the Turks would not find me, and that by a miracle I would survive. He had great faith in Providence. Time had run out. My parents were ordered to their caravan. I was hidden under the leaves. The mulberry trees shielded the well . . . or what could have been my grave. I'll never know, because during that last night, another high Turkish official got sick. The Turks needed a doctor—my father. My mother ran to the grove. I was taken out of the well.”

Sarah Bedrosian:

“I am looking at pictures and papers and documents that my father, Garabed Bedrosian, brought with him when he left Turkey in 1922. When he was in Turkey, he was bodyguard, that is, the kavas of the American consul. And he traveled with the American consul all over the countryside, and he had great opportunities to observe and to view all the atrocities and all the various things the Turks enforced on the Armenian people. He worked for the American government for seventeen years.”

Caleb Davis:

“As the American consul to Harpoot, my father was the only representative of a foreign, or a neutral, nation in that deep interior section of Turkey during the First World War; and as he says in the book, he was not particularly fond of the Armenians, but he reported the facts as he saw them and even at some risk to himself helped them out by sheltering them at the consulate, and taking care of some of their financial problems and protecting them from the brutality of the Turks.”

Sarah Bedrosian:

“In looking over my father's papers, I came across these many pages of lists of names with amounts of money that was given to Consul Davis to keep for these people who did not know what was going to happen to them.

Their belongings had been confiscated, and they were going to be exiled from their villages. And they gave this money to the consul for him to keep for them and to return it to them sometime later, if that was possible, if not, they were to give it to relatives in America and some of these they have given their addresses. For example, we have one here that says, Garabed Gulkasian, 55 dollars deposited in

the account of Leslie A. Davis. And the list you can see so many names. And then on the front page there are the addresses of the relatives in the United States."

Narrator:

One day in mid-September the Turkish bodyguard of Consul Davis confided to kavas Garabed that he knew where the killing grounds were outside of Kharpert. Secretly, under the cover of darkness, the consul and his Armenian bodyguard went out to find the missing 800.

Meanwhile, on September 18, the Turkish governor replied to the inquiry he had received earlier from the chief of the Special Organization by saying that the job was well done, that 51,000 Armenians had been deported. No mention was made of any killings.

Tacy Atkinson:

September 24: "Consul took a ride to Goljuk. He says that beginning one and a half hours from here he began seeing dead bodies, and all along every few yards, mostly women and children. . . . In the lake there were many and even at our camping place there were several washed up."

Haiastan Terzian:

"Consul Davis and kavas Garabed, they went away to Goljuk. And when they went there, they saw thousands of bodies all naked. The Turks take all their clothes and then kill them. It was such a horrible sight that they were shaken and my brother-in-law after they came back, he says: 'How God could allow such a thing happen—little children, men, and women . . . they were all slaughtered.' And this shook his faith. It took many years later to get his faith back."

Consul Davis:

"A few weeks later, Dr. Atkinson of the American Hospital expressed a desire to make this trip with me. We decided to make a complete tour of the lake this time in order to see what there might be on the other side. . . . We started about three o'clock in the morning one day the latter part of October. . . . After leaving the ruins made by the Kurds, we climbed a very steep mountain and then descended into the valley on Lake Goeljuk."

Narrator:

Lake Goljuk was a day's journey on foot from Kharpert. On opposite shores of the lake were two villages—one inhabited by Kurds, the other by Armenians.

Kacho Khachadourian, a boy of thirteen in 1915, lived in the Armenian village. His father was a boat builder and often took people on sight seeing trips. To the end of his life Kacho would sing the songs of the lake he had learned as a youth helping his father.

When Turkish troops appeared in the countryside, Kacho's mother knew that deportation and certain death were at hand. Death march or slavery? To save her sons, she decided to give them to a friendly Kurd, knowing her children would be forced to give up their Armenian identity.

Mrs. Khachadourian (reading her husband's journal):

"My uncle asked me to come over to him, and he said: 'Khachadour, my son, you are going to a foreign home. Do not forget your Christian faith. Do not forget your reading and writing. Here, I am giving to you paper, pen and pencil. Write what happens to you.'"

Narrator:

Faithful to his uncle, Kacho wrote what he witnessed at the lake. After Kacho died in 1980, his wife found the original draft of his memoirs . . . about his life as a boy on the shores of Lake Goljuk.

Kacho Khachadourian:

"We wept bitter tears when we said goodbye to mother. She said: 'Kacho, take care of your little brother.' We were leaving behind our loved ones, our relatives, and our playmates. We were close to the Kurd village, when suddenly we became terribly homesick. My brother and I ran back to our village hoping to see our loved ones again. To our sorrow there was no one there. The Turks had rounded up everybody. We saw them far in the distance, climbing a hill. The gendarmes were forcing them along. Our village was empty; only dogs roamed the streets."

Narrator:

In 1918, Consul Davis sent a report to the U.S. State Department recounting his visit to Kacho's deserted village. The Davis report

was declassified in 1987, years after Kacho wrote the same version of the facts. The consul said when he arrived at the village he found not a single inhabitant remained. It was absolutely deserted, except for a few hungry cats.

Sarah Bedrosian:

"My father told me this story one day and I have never forgotten it. He and Consul Davis were riding their horses on a trip along to Goljuk and they came up to and they saw this big book floating in the water. And immediately my father dismounted from his horse and he went into the lake and retrieved this big book. And it was dripping with water and it was still intact. When he brought it out he realized that it was a Bible. And that really touched him. And he brought it out and dried the leaves, the pages, as best he could."

Consul Davis:

"We rode around the lake for about two hours. The banks of the lake for most of this distance are high and steep while at frequent intervals there are deep valleys. In some of the valleys there were only a few bodies, but in others there were more than a thousand.

We estimated that there were not less than two thousand in that one valley. Many of them were right on the edge of the lake and their heads showed above the sand. . . . The valley was large and bodies were strewn all over it. . . . The bodies were all naked. . . . We estimated that in the course of our ride around the lake, and actually within the space of twenty-four hours, we had seen the remains of not less than ten thousand Armenians who had been killed around Lake Goeljuk. Few localities could be better suited to the fiendish purposes of the Turks in their plan to exterminate the Armenian population than this peaceful lake in the interior of Asiatic Turkey."

Narrator:

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1915, the government continued its policy of genocide. Even more people were massacred at the lake—until Kharpert was almost depleted of Armenians. Soldier and civilian Turks participated in the atrocities. Many Kurds helped Armenians escape. More often, though, Kurds were incited by the government to plunder and massacre the Armenians.

Maria Jacobsen:

October 2: "Great flocks of Kurds have come to town today and people are now again full of fear for what's going to happen. They themselves say they have been fetched by the Turks to come and finish off the rest of the Armenians. A number of them were sent by the vali to Goljuk with some cannon in order to bombard the little island out in the lake where it is said a number of Armenians are hidden."

Narrator:

Some of the Armenians who swam to safety to the island in Lake Goljuk were village friends of Kacho Khachadourian. Kacho remembered the day well. He made a list of the young men and one woman who had fled to the island.

Kacho Khachadourian:

"Shapaz Vartabedian, Haroutiun Mardigian, Miss Sultan Der Margosian."

Narrator:

Kacho was now an orphan, a slave working under his new Kurdish master—Bekir.

Kacho Khachadourian:

"Bekir walked up to me and with a sneer on his face. He said: 'Kacho, look how the Turk soldiers are burning the rebellious infidel Armenians.' I looked toward the island where the little church was burning."

Narrator:

By the autumn of 1915, Kharpert was a dismal place. The sword of terror had touched everyone. The missionaries were helpless, physically shaken by the inhuman terrors they had witnessed.

Harriet Atkinson:

"And they found all the ravines filled with dead bodies. Many of these people, Father had worked hard in the hospital to give them life, sustenance, and now they were gone. And it really did a drastic job on Father. They couldn't understand what it was the Lord had

brought them to Turkey for. And it was quite a hardship for them to see that. There were some 10,000 bodies that they saw up there by Lake Goljuk. And Father, it just undid him completely."

Tacy Atkinson:

November 25: "Thanksgiving. We have it here this year. I knew that folks would not stay till after dark so we had service at 11:30 and dinner at one. Seventeen at table included two Danes and little Bessie, an Armenian, and an American woman and her little boy who is stranded here sick. Her husband, an Armenian, was killed. All of us amidst the hard things we have are truly thankful to be alive. . . . After dinner was the usual weighings; Herbert 178, I 120, Henry 84, Alice 50, Harriet 40. All went home before dark."

Narrator:

Soon after Thanksgiving, Dr. Atkinson caught the dreaded typhus disease. Weak and broken hearted, he wondered why God had permitted such atrocities . . . such cruelty. On his deathbed, Dr. Atkinson and his physician, Dr. Mikael Hagopian, said a prayer together.

Tacy Atkinson:

"He smiled when he saw me, took my hand, pulled me down, patted my cheek, ran his fingers through my short hair, then with the forefinger of the other hand he pointed upward. . . . I knew he was trying to tell me he was going. . . . A little later he said to me: 'I am going to die on Sunday.' I asked him how he knew and he said he had measured his strength and he thought he had that much but no more. . . . He said his work was finished. . . . He had felt that God had sent him here just for the work he had done this summer. . . . At 2:25 on Christmas the breath stopped."

Narrator:

In 1917 the United States severed diplomatic relations with Turkey. Mrs. Atkinson and her three children returned to America. She left her diary behind with her furniture, for fear the Turks would discover it on her person. Eight years after she left Turkey, Tacy Atkinson's diary finally arrived in the United States, hidden in her living room sofa. No longer fearful of Turkish censorship, she made a final entry in 1924 about what her husband witnessed at Lake Goljuk.

Tacy Atkinson:

1924: "The story of this trip I did not dare to write. They saw about 10,000 bodies."

Narrator:

Tacy Atkinson died in 1967—carrying to the grave the secret of her scratched out diary. With the help of digital technology, we were finally able to decipher the words only her eyes had seen in 1915. She wrote an entry about the German missionary, Johannes Ehmann . . . whose appeals to save Armenians were never addressed by his own government.

Tacy Atkinson:

"Among the Turks and Armenians both it seems pretty well known that this thing is from the Germans. Even Mr. Ehmann himself is coming to the conviction that it is the work of his own government. We all know that such clear-cut, well planned, and well carried out work is not the method of the Turk."

Narrator:

The United States entered World War I in 1917 against Germany, Turkey's ally. The American Consulate in Kharpert was closed, and Consul Davis was reassigned to Finland.

Haiastan Terzian:

"My father, my mother, and myself were living in the American Consulate. That was our home. When the consul left, he told kavas Garabed, his bodyguard, to get all the films, all those negatives and put them in an earthen jar and bury it, so they did dig a big hole down behind the stable in the American Consulate and put the jar in there and covered it. I was standing right there too. I can remember the place and everything."

Narrator:

In 1922, kavas Garabed was allowed to leave Turkey with his family. He hid Consul Davis' photos of Lake Goljuk in the tattered clothing of the orphans accompanying him. Once out of Turkey, he corresponded with Leslie Davis through an address in Marseilles, France, and delivered the photographs to the consul in Finland.

For 50 years, kavas Garabed would not speak about what he had seen at the lake. Before his death in February 1977 at the age of 94, he finally told his family what he had witnessed.

Kavas Garabed Bedrosian:

"In the morning we went to where the 700-800 people they had pushed, driven, had killed them all. They hadn't taken them at most 7 miles. They slew them all in the mountains. We saw a majority of those dead bodies. We saw over 15,000 dead bodies, all naked. They'd kill and then declothe them and discard them. Women, children, old people, the youth—they were spread on the ground. The situation was very awesome, sad."

Narrator:

The photographs of Consul Davis had remained buried in an earthen jar for five years. For more than 70 years, the aging negatives were neglected. They had been forgotten by the Davis family and had been hidden to the world. Most were ruined by weather and moisture. The few that have survived attest to an unspeakable carnage around the shores of Lake Goljuk and elsewhere in the province of Kharpert. After almost a century, the words of Consul Leslie Davis ring from the blood-stained earth of Kharpert.

Consul Davis:

"That which took place around beautiful Lake Goeljuk in the summer of 1915 is almost inconceivable. Thousands and thousands of Armenians, mostly innocent and helpless women and children, were butchered on its shores and barbarously mutilated. . . . There were fully 150,000 Armenians in the Vilayet prior to 1915; at the end of that year there remained only 8,000 or 10,000. . . . This may well be called the 'Slaughterhouse Vilayet' of Turkey."

Narrator:

Armenian voices are now silent but they still echo at the headwaters of the Tigris River. The bodies long since have floated down the nearby Euphrates. The water is clear, the lake peaceful, as if for all eternity.

J. Michael Hagopian:

"It was only a lifetime ago, this lake, this city, this land had witnessed the most tragic and momentous event in Armenian history. A civilization lay dead under the mulberry trees. Within the life span of one mulberry leaf, a community had vanished. My family escaped and sought a land of freedom. We arrived in America in 1923, but left behind us a lost world.

I still remember my mother saying: '*Gareli eh zhohovurt me pnachnchel, paitz yerpek gareli che zain lretsnel*' (It is possible to exterminate a people, but never is it possible to silence them)."

POSTSCRIPT:

WHAT HAPPENED IN KHARPET WAS REPEATED IN MORE THAN 4,000 TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE. MOST OF THE ARMENIAN POPULATION, 1,500,000 MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN, WERE ANNIHILATED AND THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE WERE UPROOTED FROM THEIR ANCIENT HOMELAND. THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT STILL DENIES THAT THE GENOCIDE TOOK PLACE.